

Hello, my name is Mary Ferrell and I am the Executive Director of Maslow Project serving over 2,000 homeless youth ages 0-22 in Southern Oregon. I am also a member of the Housing Stability Committee. I am writing in support of HB 2163 for long-term rent assistance for youth experiencing homelessness. Now more than ever before, youth exiting foster care or experiencing homelessness have overwhelming barriers to housing of any sort, furthering barriers to education, employment, or other critical services including mental health. Homeless youth in Oregon are primarily NOT in foster care systems, juvenile justice, or shelter facilities. They are primarily in our public schools and most do not have a safety net once they exit school. Those who are exiting institutional care, do not magically have the capacity to self support the day they turn 18. In either case, these youth often fall outside of the safety-net and consequently are three times more likely to drop out of school, 7 times more likely to experience suicidal thoughts or attempts, and 4.5 times more likely to become chronically homeless adults - furthering costs to the system and negatively impacting individual long-term outcomes. One youth we serve is currently 17 and lives in a car with his father. Last week, his father committed suicide. Next week, this youth turns 18. He still has 4 months of high school to complete and now without a parent to help guide his next steps - this youth could be greatly assisted if he had support for long-term rental assistance with supportive services. Housing Authorities and nonprofits are collaborating like never before to support homeless youth & families - what is missing: long term rent assistance. Thank you.